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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/07/2017

TAGS: PGOV NI ELECTIONS

SUBJECT: DPP'S BAFARAWA ON CAMPAIGN, POLITICAL BASE

Classified By: Ambassador John Campbell for reasons 1.4 (b & d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In a February 4 meeting with the Ambassador, Sokoto State Governor Attahiru Baifarawa offered his take on the presidential race, his own campaign as the Democratic Peoples' Party (DPP) candidate, and widening his political base of support to include northern Christians. Baifarawa welcomed the Ambassador's statements regarding the need for free, fair, credible elections. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Sokoto State Governor Attahiru Baifarawa contended that ANPP Presidential candidate General Muhammadu Buhari's dearth of sufficient funds was delaying the formal launch of his campaign. He surmised that were Buhari to drop out of contention, he would throw his weight behind Baifarawa. Baifarawa predicted that Action Congress (AC) Presidential aspirant Vice President Atiku Abubakar would soon "concede" to him as well. He stated that President Obasanjo was currently scheming to "destabilize" Sokoto State and was manipulating the Economic Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to "terrify" recalcitrant politicians. Baifarawa also said that he met with Senate President Ken Nnamani, proposing the Vice Presidential slot to him. He added that Nnamani divulged that he was presently attempting to "arrange for all PDP senators to decamp simultaneously" in order to remain Senate President. In the event that Nnamani will not agree to the VP slot, Baifarawa is prepared to approach the House Speaker.

¶3. (C) With regard to Baifarawa's political base of support, he remarked that he enjoys extensive popularity among northern Christians, having donated private funds in the past to restore burned or vandalized churches. He noted that he is reaching out to prominent Christian leaders in Nigeria, including Anglican Archbishop Akinola, president of the Nigerian Christian Association and Father Matthew Kuka, a catholic cleric close to President Obasanjo, to curry support for his campaign.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: Governor Baifarawa appears self-assured and confident that "only he" can rally the requisite votes needed to win in April. He claims a large following among northern Christians, though acknowledges that he cannot compete with Buhari's popularity among the region's Muslims. Baifarawa hails from a wealthy Sokoto family. A February 9 "Daily Trust" article reports that the Sokoto State House Assembly has charged Baifarawa with 11 counts of gross misconduct, including embezzlement and diversion of State funds for private consumption. Charges were brought by ANPP House members, who clashed on February 1 with DPP Assembly members.

END COMMENT.

CAMPBELL